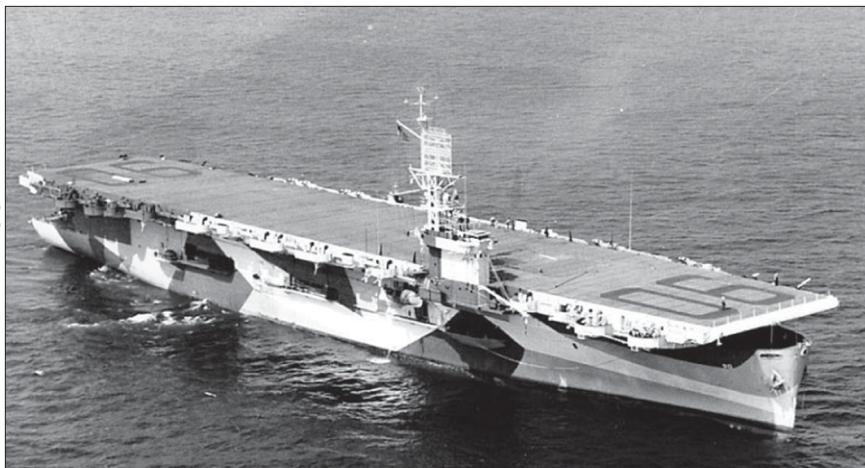


CLATSOP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

CUMTUX



Vol. 34, No. 4 — Fall 2014



USS THETIS BAY (CVE-90) PHOTOGRAPHED ON AUGUST 7, 1944
THE SHIP IS PAINTED IN CAMOUFLAGE MEASURE 33, DESIGN 10A.
SHE WAS BUILT AT THE KAISER SHIPBUILDING COMPANY AT VANCOUVER,
WASHINGTON FROM WHERE IT WAS LAUNCHED MARCH 16, 1944. SEE STORY PAGE 45.

In This Issue ...

Two stories in this issue are related to the DeLaura beach area. “Dutch Wagner, the three minute man” story came about while CCHS volunteer Sheila Nolan was in the process of scanning hundreds of mortuary records for our files. She suddenly stopped and said “This one says the man was ‘killed by a penitentiary.’” We had to know more. The result was one of the strangest stories in Clatsop County history. The second DeLaura beach story is a recent donation by Millicent Ripa of the bombing of the coast by a Japanese submarine during World War II, described by her mother, Victoria Lamb. We’ve also reprinted a 12-year old *Cumtux* story by Annalou B. Thomas about Claudette Colbert in order to use the recent donation of Bill Nolan’s photos of this famous actress, who stayed ten days at Gearhart during World War II.

Calvin Tibbets may not be a familiar name to those interested in Clatsop County and Oregon history, but he can now take the place he deserves among the most influential of our early pioneers. Jerry Sutherland spent several years pursuing data about Tibbets in repositories throughout the state and has put it all together, with the first half in this issue and the second half to be in the following issue.

—The Editor

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Front Cover: Actress Claudette Colbert at the
commissioning ceremony of the
USS Thetis Bay, April 21, 1944 in
Vancouver, Washington.
CCHS IMAGE #14.011.002,
BILL NOLAN COLLECTION

CUMTUX: Chinook jargon:
"To know... to inform"

CALVIN TIBBETS: OREGON'S FIRST PIONEER

Part 1 of 2

By Jerry Sutherland

AT NOON on October 29, 1832 eleven American men and their leader, Nathaniel Wyeth, arrived at Fort Vancouver, the hub of operations for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in Oregon Country.¹ Chief Factor John McLoughlin greeted them cordially, despite knowing that Wyeth was there to compete with the HBC, and suspecting that he was affiliated with Hall Kelley, another American who planned to build a colony in Oregon as the first step in making it part of the United States.² Eventually, both Wyeth and Kelley would fail in their ventures, but one of the men they brought to Oregon—Calvin Tibbets—stayed to make it his home and pave the way for other Americans to follow. In doing so, this obscure fellow would become Oregon's first pioneer without anyone—including himself—recognizing it.

Oregon statehood may seem inevitable today, but in 1832 it was not. The United States and Great Britain had agreed to joint occupation of Oregon Country as an expediency to end the War of 1812, but the HBC had built a commercial empire that no American

enterprise could compete with. The monopoly charter and powers of state, granted the HBC by Great Britain, gave it virtual control of Oregon Country. A few years before Wyeth's group arrived, HBC retirees had started settling along the Willamette River. Since British negotiators had told their American counterparts that the "rights of exclusive sovereignty... would someday come to the nation that settled the country," Oregon Country was looking more Canadian than American.³

The American pioneers who flooded into Oregon in the 1840s eventually turned the tide, but timing, politics, and other factors came into play. A few members of Congress began pushing for American acquisition of Oregon Country soon after the War of 1812 ended, but they met resistance, especially from Southern Democrats who wanted nothing to do with adding new territory that was filled with non-whites. As disease brought by whites killed off Oregon's Indians, the racial mix became more acceptable to them.⁴ Some of the American pioneers threatened the HBC with

violence, damage, and theft—to the extent that McLoughlin's supervisor, Governor George Simpson, moved the Columbia District headquarters to Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island in 1845 just to get away from them.⁵ By then the HBC had trapped out most of the beaver population in Oregon, and the European market for beaver hats was declining, so the HBC had little to lose. And though they had increased in number, the British citizens in Oregon were just too few to justify war. This left British negotiators at a disadvantage with their American counterparts: if the HBC no longer cared that much about Oregon, how could they pretend a willingness to fight for it?⁶

By contrast, American negotiators were being instructed to play hardball by James Polk, an expansionist President who had run his 1844 campaign using the slogan "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight." A growing number of American citizens living in Oregon—who had petitioned the United States to acquire the territory, and had taken the initiative to form an independent government when they were ignored—gave Polk the kind of leverage he needed to carry out his agenda with the British and his own Congress. After nearly thirty years, the Treaty of 1846 brought all of the Oregon Country south of the forty-ninth parallel (Oregon Territory) into the United States.⁷

Given the critical role they played in making Oregon part of the United

States, it is surprising that no American has previously been identified as Oregon's first pioneer.⁸ Ironically, the British claimed one of their own for the distinction. A 1908 book review of Dr. John McLoughlin, the Father of Oregon in the Royal Geographic Society's *The Geographic Journal* said, "This is a simple and interesting record of the career of the first pioneer of Oregon."⁹ The author of the book being reviewed was Frederick Holman, President of the Oregon Historical Society. He clearly intended giving tribute to McLoughlin for helping so many Americans when they arrived in Oregon, but he did not refer to him as an Oregon pioneer. Those pioneers still alive who had been helped by McLoughlin would likely have agreed with Holman in calling him the "Father of Oregon," but they never would have considered him one of their own, much less first.¹⁰ They had trudged two thousand miles to claim free land in Oregon for themselves. To achieve that, Oregon would have to become part of the United States; and for that to happen they would have to push McLoughlin's HBC out of the way.¹¹

The Royal Geographic Society was obviously taking liberties with the definition of "pioneer." When used for other purposes, or even applied to other American states, that might be acceptable; but the phrase "Oregon pioneer" has a well-established connotation that must be accommodated by the criteria used for identifying

“Oregon’s first pioneer”: he or she must have been the first American to come to Oregon with the intent to settle permanently and make it part of the United States.¹² That means that none of the first white men to visit Oregon qualify. There are many firsts among them, but they were explorers, scientists, soldiers, mountain men, sailors, and entrepreneurs—not colonizers.

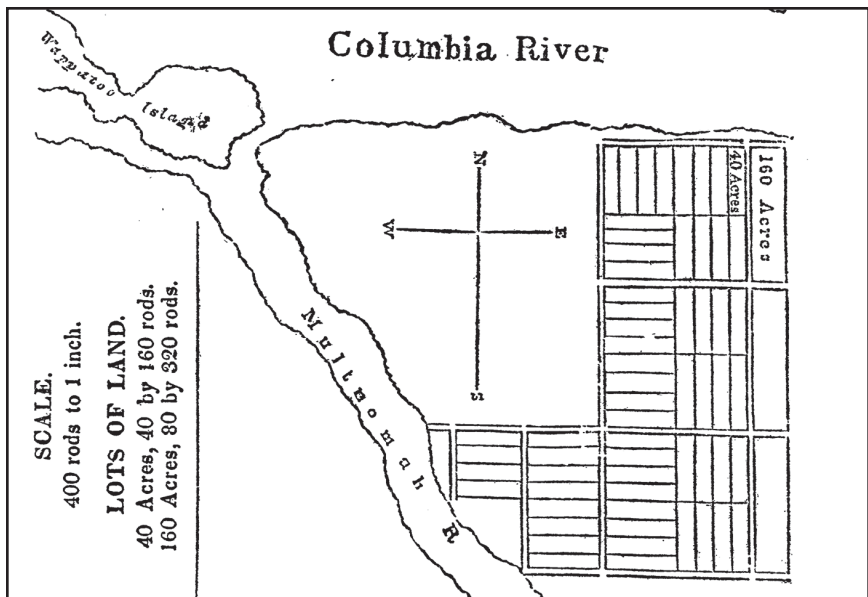
It is important to recognize that Oregon’s Indians had developed successful civilizations for a millennia before whites from any nation arrived. Oregon was not a wilderness to them, nor a frontier that needed pioneering, nor a land open to colonization by any foreign country. The Oregon pioneers of the 1840s and 1850s knew that to get their free land they would have to get rid of the Indians as well the HBC, and they did so even more aggressively.¹³ No defense can be made for the many atrocities inflicted by American pioneers on Oregon’s Indians, but identifying the first among them serves a historical purpose, even if the designation is seen as an ignominious one by Oregon’s native people.

If it had been up to Hall Kelley, American settlers would have pushed the HBC out of the way in 1832. Since 1817 he had worked to bring Oregon Country into the United States, and had come to believe the best way to accomplish that was to establish a permanent colony of American settlers. In 1824, while still an educator and text book author, Kelley publicly

announced plans to settle Oregon Country, and by 1829 he had dedicated himself to the endeavor full-time. He established the American Society for Encouraging the Settlement of the Oregon Territory (American Society) and in 1831 began soliciting members through agents, advertisements, and circulars.¹⁴

In the eighty pages of *A General Circular to All Persons of Good Character, Who Wish to Emigrate to the Oregon Territory* Kelley laid out detailed plans for his colony in Oregon and described the kind of settler he was looking for: “The valley of the Multnomah will be occupied for agricultural and manufacturing operations, where likewise, a two mile square will be appropriated for a trading town” by “men of steady habits, virtuous intentions, endeavoring to cultivate practical knowledge and honest industry” and who would be “actuated by no other motives, than those of philanthropy and patriotism.” Kelley was deeply religious and included a missionary component to his plans. He acknowledged Indian ownership of the land, but naively and incorrectly assumed that they would gladly trade their lands for Jesus, education, housing, training in farming, and other aspects of civilization after being exposed to them.¹⁵

Like many visionaries, Kelley was ahead of his time. The press ridiculed him, not enough people signed up, and Congress would not help



HALL KELLEY'S "GENERAL CIRCULAR," 1831.

PROPOSED KELLEY COLONY

out. Eventually, he gave up on the American Society.¹⁶ That probably worked out for the best. Hundreds of American pioneers setting up camp just downstream from Fort Vancouver in 1832, fired up to oust the HBC while they were still seeing high profits from their Oregon Country operations, could have led to another war with Great Britain. Disease was starting to weaken the tribes along the Columbia River, who had the most contact with whites, but it had not yet completely decimated them.¹⁷ A large group of Americans settling on their lands could have caused a violent reaction. Fourteen years later the Oregon Territory became part of the United States without bloodshed.

One of those who had signed on as an agent with Kelley was Nathaniel

Wyeth. He was not interested in Kelley's vision of patriotic colonization, but saw the American Society as an expedient way to get to Oregon Country to carry out his own commercial plans to trap beaver, fish for salmon, and ship them back to Massachusetts. Wyeth's previous business success made him confident he could successfully compete with the HBC where others had failed. By the end of 1831 Wyeth had begun to doubt Kelley's ability to organize and lead anyone to Oregon Country, and he objected strenuously to Kelley's decision to include families, so he set up the Pacific Trading Company and started recruiting on his own.¹⁸

After a couple months of meetings, and ten days of training on Long Island (none of them, including

Wyeth, had any wilderness experience), twenty-two members of the Pacific Trading Company left Boston Harbor by ship on March 10, 1832. Four men joined them after landing in Baltimore. From there they headed overland by train, wagon, and horseback. Desertions began almost immediately: living outdoors and overland travel was not as easy as it had sounded sitting around Wyeth's fireplace in Cambridge.¹⁹ Fourteen of the twenty-six men eventually turned back, most of them after the Pierre's Hole Rendezvous. Three of those men died before getting home. The day after the rendezvous broke up, the mountain men got into a major battle with a band of Gros Ventres. Wyeth's men stayed out of the fight, and they all made it to Oregon Country, but three of them had died within four years of arrival.²⁰ Wyeth led a larger group of fifty men to Oregon Country in 1834. On September 22, 1835 he wrote his wife that he "had lost by drowning, disease, and warfare 17 persons up to this date, and 14 now sick."²¹ Many pioneers would later die on the Oregon Trail, but they would have nowhere near the 30% mortality rate of Wyeth's expeditions. Being first had its risks.

Though initially protesting the defection, Kelley eventually asked Wyeth to take three American Society members with him. Kelley's biographer, Fred Wilbur Powell, identified them as: "J. Sinclair of New York; John Ball, a native of New Hampshire, practicing

[sic] law in New York; Calvin Tibbets [Tibbets], a native of Maine and by trade a stone-cutter."²² All three men continued to Oregon, whereas only nine of the twenty-three men Wyeth recruited stuck it out.²³ This suggests that colonization was a more powerful driving force than the prospects of financial gain.

When Sinclair, Ball, and Tibbets transferred to Wyeth it was to expedite their settlement in Oregon, as indicated in a letter John Sinclair wrote to Kelley: "What difference would it make to the Society, should I go to the Oregon country with Capt. Wyeth's party, if in the country when the expedition arrives."²⁴ These men did not know then that Kelley would eventually abandon his colonization effort. They were just using Wyeth to get there quicker. Since Kelley had been recruiting in the same market as Wyeth for a longer period of time, the assumption has to be made that the men who signed up with Wyeth were in it for profit rather than colonization. Sinclair's letter, along with American Society membership, establishes Ball, Sinclair, and Tibbets as the initial candidates for designation as Oregon's first pioneer, because they had signed up with Kelley, whose intent was colonization of Oregon to the eventual end of American statehood.

Wyeth's enterprise failed within a month of arriving in Oregon Country, because the ship he had sent to meet them there, the *Sultana*, had ship-

wrecked on a reef in the Society Islands. He was left with no supplies, or items for trading with Indians, and no way to return his furs and salmon to Boston.²⁵ So Wyeth released Calvin Tibbets and the other men from their contracts saying, “they were good men and persevered as long as perseverance would do good.”²⁶ On his second expedition, Wyeth was fleeced by competing American fur companies, which made it even more difficult to compete with the HBC. After four years of concerted effort, Nathaniel Wyeth gave up and returned to Cambridge.²⁷

Wyeth was eventually recognized for having led the first permanent American settlers to Oregon, even though that was not his purpose. Historian Robert Clark called this “the wedge that eventually split the Hudson’s Bay Company monopoly.”²⁸ Matthew Deady (Oregon Territorial Supreme Court Judge and the first Federal District Court Judge of Oregon) appropriately expanded the credit to include Kelley: “this attempt of Wyeth’s, which itself was largely a consequence of Kelley’s scheme, was not without results conducive [sic] to American occupation. Divers persons employed in the enterprise remained in the country and were the beginning of the independent American settlers in the country.”²⁹ Since neither Kelley nor Wyeth stayed in Oregon, it was up to men like Calvin Tibbets, to drive that wedge in.

The first thing Tibbets and his cohorts did to pave the way for future Oregon pioneers was to finalize sections of the route they would take. In 1832 the Oregon Trail did not exist. Fur trappers had defined the route along the Platte River and across the Rocky Mountains at South Pass, in order to get to their annual rendezvous. But the route from the Rockies to Oregon was yet to be precisely worked out. For the Oregon Trail to become what geographer Richard Loy called the “path of empire” by “opening the Oregon Country to occupation by pioneers and acquisition by the United States,” someone had to fill in the gaps.³⁰

In 1884 Hubert Howe Bancroft said that Wyeth’s 1832 expedition “marked the way for the ox-teams which were so shortly to bring the Americanized civilization of Europe across the roadless continent.”³¹ Fifty years later, Archer Hulbert said, “Before 1830 that track to the Rockies was not recognized as a highway to the Pacific, and prior to 1835 it would have been idle to try to persuade the public that women and children could, in one season, go comfortably from Atlantic tide water to the Pacific.” Of Wyeth’s journal Hulbert said, “It is the first account we have of the experiences of Americans traversing what became the historic Oregon-California trail across Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon to the mouth of the Columbia.”³² In its 1998 report, the Oregon Trail Coordination Council described the route worked

out by Wyeth' men as "the Oregon Trail as far as the Grande Rhonde Valley" and the "Whitman Trail over the western summits of the Blue Mountains." As to its significance: "Wyeth's initial trip in 1832 provided the foundation and experience for the 1834 trip...Wyeth's route was a precursor to the Oregon Trail route followed by hundreds of thousands beginning just a decade later."³³

In the spring of 1833, after wintering at Fort Vancouver, Calvin Tibbets and John Ball headed south to farm at Champoege, at the upper end of French Prairie, along the Willamette River between the modern cities of Salem and Newburg. John Sinclair joined them from time to time during that summer.³⁴ French Canadians and Americans had traveled through the area trapping beaver, going back to John Jacob Astor's failed Pacific Fur Company venture twenty years earlier. But recent HBC retirees were the first to make it their permanent home, just a couple years earlier, and more HBC retirees joined them every year.³⁵ Ball, Tibbets, and Sinclair were there just in time to serve as American placeholders in Oregon's first permanent settlement.

Unfortunately Ball and Sinclair only lasted one summer. The first three months, while building his own cabin, Ball stayed with Jean Baptiste Deportes McKay, who he described to a friend in a letter home as "a half-breed, with two wives, his name J.

B. Deportes. Yes, two wives, seven children, and cats and dogs numberless." After the novelty of this wore off, Ball found himself unable to tolerate the rough ways of his French Canadian neighbors, and their intermarriage with Indians, long enough to wait for Kelley to bring more civilized Americans to associate with. Ball and Sinclair also suffered nearly constant bouts of malaria. The effect this disease was having on the Kalapuyans bothered him as well. It likely made them both fear for their own well-being. Ball and Sinclair booked passage on the HBC's supply ship the *Dryad*, and set sail for home in the middle of October 1833. Eventually Ball found the sort of colonization he was looking for in the development of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he left a lasting legacy.³⁶ As Fred Powell points out, once Ball and Sinclair left, "Calvin Tibbetts [Tibbets] was the only man whose enrollment on the books of the American Society was followed by emigration and settlement."³⁷

Two other Americans remained in Oregon who had come with Wyeth, but were not members of the American Society. Greely Sargent trapped for the HBC for a couple years, but when he died in 1836 he was at the Willamette Methodist Mission.³⁸ Solomon Smith taught the children at Fort Vancouver until the summer of 1834, when he left for French Prairie to live with Clatsop princess Celiast (who he had met at Fort Vancouver) and teach

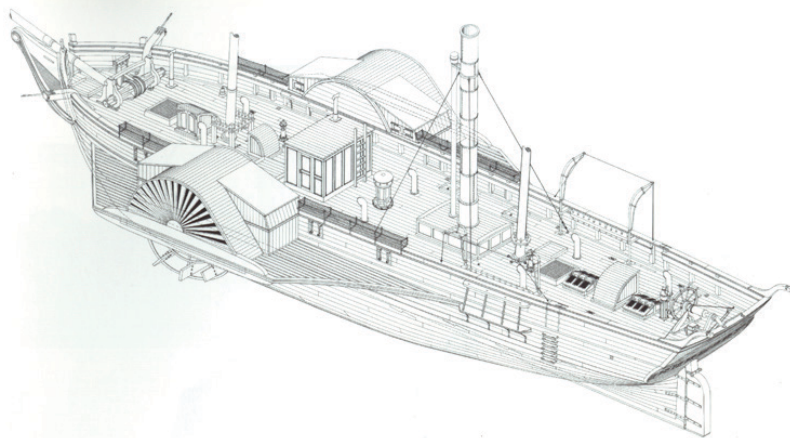
the children of the retired French Canadians. From 1836 to 1840 Smith helped build and operate a saw mill with Ewing Young. Then he moved to Clatsop Plains, the coastal area between Seaside and Warrenton, because Celiast wanted to return to her people. The Methodists hired him to help them build a mission there, with Calvin Tibbets joining them to form the first settlement in Clatsop County.³⁹

At this point Calvin Tibbets qualifies as Oregon's first pioneer, but does he actually deserve to be recognized for it? Being the last of Kelley's American Society standing proved he was the first American to come to Oregon to settle permanently, build an American colony, and make it part of the United States; but what did he do to carry out this intention?

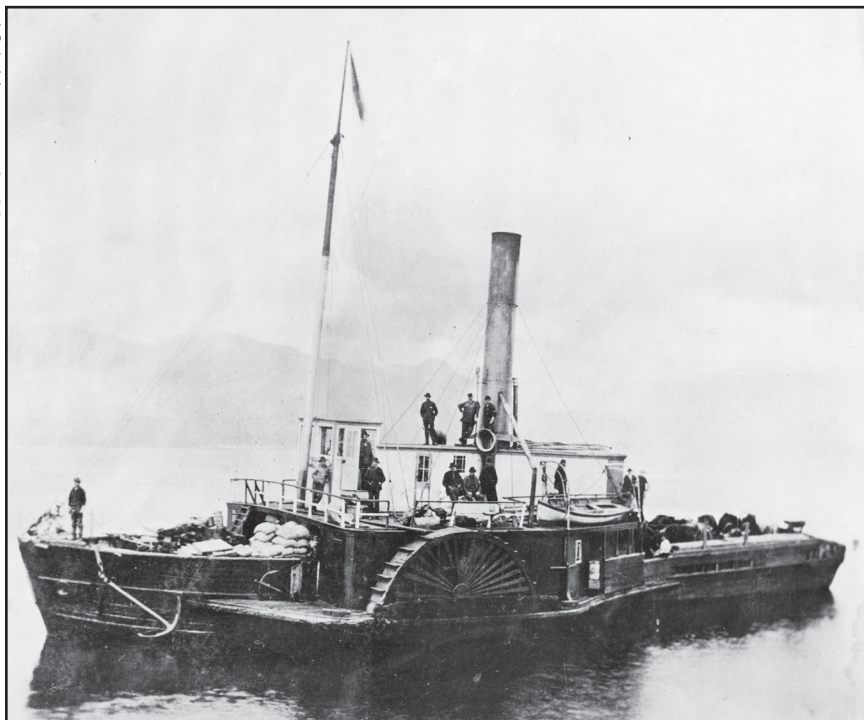
When Fred Powell wrote Kelley's biography, he knew that other Americans would eventually arrive in Oregon, and that it would become part of the United States; but in 1833 Tibbets did not. He likely had begun doubting that Kelley would show up with his colonists, and had no idea when others might come. To survive long enough to support them—if and when they did arrive—Tibbets would have to get along with his French Canadian neighbors, the HBC, and local Indians. This would require a more flexible personality, adaptable belief system, and lower expectations than John Ball possessed.

Born the son of a farmer, Ball had worked his way through college to become an attorney and successful businessman. One result of his climbing the social ladder—evident in his writing—was a disdain for laborers such as Tibbets, equal to that which he felt for his French Canadian neighbors.⁴⁰ Tibbets likely felt more at home. Though stonemasons are now considered middle class, in the early 1800s they were at the lower end of America's class structure. His stonemason skills, and the physical strength and acceptance of hard work the trade required, would have given Tibbets something more practical to trade than Ball's advanced education, legal skills, and business acumen. Being a lower class laborer increased Tibbets chances to survive in Oregon.

Fitting in would mean adopting the ways of his neighbors. There were no white women anywhere in Oregon Country when Calvin Tibbets arrived, but he would have noticed—as had John Ball—that his neighbors each had at least one Indian or métis wife. In addition to satisfying their basic need for companionship, employees of the HBC had learned that these “country marriages” were a key to survival and doing business among the tribes they traded with.⁴¹ The same benefits would have been obvious to Tibbets. He took up the practice, according to Rev. Jason Lee, who reported that on May 26, 1840 that he “reached the lower part of the settlement, and about



PLANS FOR THE S.S. BEAVER



THE S.S. BEAVER, LADEN WITH CARGO INCLUDING SEVERAL CATTLE IN THE STERN.

sunset set off on horseback for the mission. Night came on, and I slept at the house of Mrs. E. Tibbits [Tibbets].⁴² Whoever “Mrs. E” was, she had to have been Indian, so their relationship shows Calvin Tibbets was more flexible than John Ball, and willing to adopt to a culture unlike his own.⁴³

The HBC was the main force to be reckoned with if Tibbets was to survive in Oregon. Fort Vancouver was the only place to purchase supplies, typically trading them for wheat or furs; and HBC records show Tibbets did such trading.⁴⁴ He was invited on an inaugural run of the HBC’s first steamship, the *Beaver*, in 1836. Samuel Clarke reported Willie McKay’s description of the event in 1905:

He recollects it as one of the sunniest days in all his life—the happiest time he had any memory of. There were aboard McLoughlin, Douglas, McKinley and Work, and their families; also Pambrun, Missionary Samuel Parker, a companion of Whitman; John R. Thompson, of Philadelphia, the ornithologist; Calvin Tibbets [Tibbets], James Gervais, E. Lucie and H. B. Emers. It was a distinguished party. So the *Beaver* made her trial trip, and for the first time a steam vessel ploughed the waters of the Columbia River.⁴⁵

This indicates Tibbets had gone beyond survival to earn some measure of respect with the HBC within four years of his arrival in Oregon Country.

Calvin Tibbets did not have to wait long for more Americans to join him in Oregon. In October 1834 missionary Jason Lee and his nephew Daniel, with their lay assistants Cyrus Shepard and P. L. Edwards, arrived to start a mission at the southern end of French Prairie.⁴⁶ Tibbets was Congregationalist, another religion involved with missionary efforts, so he likely offered whatever assistance he could.⁴⁷ Jason Lee had felt comfortable enough to stay at Tibbets home when he was not there, and when Rev. Joseph Frost passed through on his way to the mission September 29, 1841 Tibbets loaned him a horse.⁴⁸ When the Methodists formed Oregon’s first temperance society in 1836 Tibbets signed on, and he did the same later with Presbyterians on Clatsop Plains.⁴⁹ This indicates that Tibbets believed in the missionary aspect of the American Society.

Missionaries failed completely in their goal of Christianizing Indians. However, they had a role in bringing American wagon train pioneers to Oregon. After their first mission was established, the Methodists sent more missionaries, including women, and eventually entire families. These missionaries wrote letters home to family and religious journals speaking of the moderate climate and fertile valleys of Oregon.⁵⁰ Kelley had been correct in thinking American families could survive in Oregon, but someone had to prove it before most families would be willing to take the chance.

Mr Tibbets
 Sir please to pay Mr Edwards
 twelve dollars on my account as I stand
 Indebted to the Company and have not
 the means of settling it as soon as it is
 Required
 Wallumet 3 Nov 1837 E Young

NOTE FROM EWING YOUNG TO CALVIN TIBBETS.

While the Methodists were busy constructing their mission on the Willamette, another group of Americans were on their way to Oregon, this time from California. Hall Kelley was to finally make it to Oregon, sans American Society colonists. He had left Boston nearly two years earlier, traveled a difficult, circuitous route across Mexico, losing all his possessions to the authorities along the way. In California, Kelley managed to convince Ewing Young, an experienced American fur trapper, to lead him to Oregon. Kelley became so ill with malaria on the trip that Michel LaFramboise (leader of the HBC trappers who were competing with Young in California but happened to encounter each other on the way back) took pity on him, administered some quinine, and got him back to Fort Vancouver ahead of the rest of the group. There Kelley was

cared for and given a cabin to recover in. For other reasons, Kelley felt himself treated poorly by the British and Americans alike, so he left on the next ship out, never to return. However, he continued to lobby for American acquisition of Oregon Country once home.⁵¹ Considered a failure by most, and an obnoxious fellow by all, Kelley deserves credit for bringing both Calvin Tibbets and Ewing Young to Oregon.

Ewing Young, like Nathaniel Wyeth, was a man of action. Once in Oregon he established a fifty square mile ranch, "the standard size of a 'squatter's claim' by New Mexican and Californian standards," on Tualatin Plains, where he ran his horses, grew wheat, built a saw mill, operated a store, and hired men to work for him. The Oregon Trails Historic Trails Report said, "His profit margins, and extraordinary bookkeeping endeared

him to the growing population of Americans, who entrusted their precious money with him, gradually establishing Young as a banker of sorts.”⁵² Finally an American who could successfully compete with the HBC had arrived in Oregon Country.

Evidently Oregon’s first banker was not always flush with cash. In 1837 Ewing Young borrowed twelve dollars from Calvin Tibbets to pay some debts, and after his death in 1841 his estate paid Tibbets twenty-three dollars. Adjusted for inflation this comes to about \$624.⁵³ Though not a great amount of money, it shows that the man Americans most trusted with their money in Oregon had a close enough relationship with Calvin Tibbets to know he had the money to borrow, and felt comfortable asking him for it. Tibbets was able and willing to assist in the financial health of the American community in Oregon. ✍

This article would not have been written if not for my father, Art Sutherland, taking an interest in Calvin Tibbets 10 years ago. He remains my primary consultant. Several historians, writers, and academics gave me feedback, all of all which was helpful. I can’t name them all here, but I must call out Hannah Allan, who thoroughly marked up my first draft, and did so with such cheerful enthusiasm that I felt confident the effort to rewrite it would be worth while. Every resource librarian and archivist at the institutions cited in the notes below deserve credit for

their patience and skill. The folks who had to put up with me the most were at the Oregon Historical Society, Clatsop County Historical Society, Hudson’s Bay Company/Manitoba Archives, and Oregon State Archives.

Notes

1. Frederic G. Young, ed., *The Correspondence and Journals of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, 1831–1836*, (Eugene, Ore: University Press, 1899), 176–77. “Oregon”, “Oregon Country”, and “Oregon Territory” are often used interchangeably. Technically, “Oregon Country” was the entire area established by the United States and Great Britain in the Convention of 1818, which ran from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean, and from the northern edge of Mexico’s claims at the 42nd parallel to the southern edge of Russia’s claims at 54°50’, an area that includes the current states of Washington and Idaho, the western sections of Montana and Wyoming; and most of Canada’s British Columbia. “Oregon Territory” was the specific section of the “Oregon Country” that became part of the United States in the Treaty of 1846, which is all of it south of the 48th Parallel. “Oregon” is most appropriately used for the boundaries of the current state of Oregon. This is where pioneers first settled and formed the first government, and it is the area of primary focus of this article. For maps and a history of these different boundaries, see: Oregon Historical Society, “Oregon Boundaries Historic Viewer,” Oregon History Project, <http://ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/historicviewer/OregonBoundary/index.cfm> (accessed January 21, 2014).

2. Stephen Dow Beckham, “Notable Oregonians: John McLoughlin – Father of Oregon,” *Oregon Blue Book*, <http://bluebook.state.or.us/notable/notmcloughlin.htm> (accessed January 24, 2014); E.E. Rich, ed., *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee: First Series, 1825–38* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 108–09.

3. Young, *Journals of Wyeth*, xiv–xvii; Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 69–71; Gregory P. Shine, “Hudson’s Bay Company,” *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/hudson_s_bay_company (accessed January 22, 2014); Frederick Merk, *The Oregon Question: Essays in Anglo-American Diplomacy and Politics* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 172.

4. Young, *Journals of Wyeth*, xvi; White, *Misfortune*, 73–76.

5. Merk, *Oregon Question*, xii–xiii, 244–54;

6. Stephen Dow Beckham, "Oregon History: Land-based Fur Trade and Exploration," *Oregon Blue Book*, <http://www.bluebook.state.or.us/cultural/history/history06.htm> (accessed January 22, 2014).

7. Stephen Dow Beckham, "Oregon History: The 'Oregon Question' and Provisional Government," *Oregon Blue Book*, <http://www.bluebook.state.or.us/cultural/history/history10.htm> (accessed January 13, 2014). The American pioneers were of course unaware of the positions of the American and British negotiators. One of the reasons the Applegate Trail was established was to provide Americans a safer route to travel between Oregon and the United States if war broke out. This was in 1846, the same year the Oregon Question was answered: Jeff LaLande, "Applegate Trail," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/applegate__trail (accessed January 22, 2014).

8. Based on a search of several internet search engines, JSTOR, HathiTrust, Google, Google Books, Google Scholar, Archive.org, and Worldcat, using "Oregon's first pioneer", "first Oregon pioneer", and "first pioneer of Oregon".

9. "Short Notices," *The Geographical Journal* 31, no. 4 (1908): 438.

10. McLoughlin became an American citizen after leaving the HBC, but that was long after he could have been considered a pioneer. Some historians have suggested that his benevolence was not entirely out of personal kindness. He justified his actions with superiors by saying that he aided American settlers because if he had not, they would have pillaged the forts along the Oregon Trail as well as in Oregon Country. Americans had a negative view of despots, benevolent or not, so many had a hard time feeling thankful to McLoughlin. Many despised him: Leslie M. Scott, "Influence of American Settlement Upon the Oregon Boundary Treaty of 1846" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (March 1928): 17–19. In 1957 the Oregon State Legislature concluded that McLoughlin had been mistreated by his contemporary Oregonians and attempted to make up for this by taking up Holman's theme: they named him the "Father of Oregon" and had his statue displayed on the state's behalf in Washington, D. C.: Beckham, "McLoughlin – Father of Oregon."

11. William G. Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 83.

12. Narrowing the use of the term "pioneer" to those who first ventured to a region new to them, with the intent to settle permanently and colonize it on behalf of their home country is supported by the discussion of "pioneer," "settler," and "colonize" at: *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, s.v. "pioneer," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pioneer> (accessed January 22, 2014; *Ibid.*, s.v. "settler," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/settler> (accessed January 22,

2014); *Ibid.*, s.v. "colony," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colony>. The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* is based on the print version of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*." See: *Ibid.*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/info/faq.htm> (accessed January 22, 2014).

13. See note 11 above. As will be shown, Calvin Tibbets had a much different attitude towards Oregon's Indians than the American pioneers that came later.

14. Fred Wilbur Powell, ed., "Introduction," *Hall J. Kelley On Oregon: A Collection of Five Of His Published Works And A Number of Hitherto Unpublished Letters* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), vii–xxi. Powell points out that Kelley was not the first or only American to promote the settlement of Oregon. Henry Brackenridge first raised the subject in 1814 in his *Views of Louisiana*, which sparked the interest of Thomas Hart Benton who, after becoming a U.S. Senator, recruited Representative John Floyd and others to lobby Congress on behalf of Oregon. However, Kelley is the only one to have actually planned a colony and recruited settlers, a few of whom eventually made it, though under Wyeth's leadership. For a complete biography of Kelley and a comprehensive examination of the part he and others played in bringing Oregon into the United States, see: Fred Wilbur Powell, *Hall Jackson Kelley, Prophet of Oregon* (Portland, Ore: The Ivy press, 1917).

15. Powell, *Kelley on Oregon*, 71–92. Kelley's details include a plot of the town, which was to be located on the peninsula where the Willamette River enters the Columbia River. In 1926 it was named Kelley Point in his honor: Lewis A. McArthur, *Oregon Geographical Names*, 4th ed. (Portland, Ore: Oregon Historical Society, 1974), 403.

16. *Ibid.*, xiii–xix.

17. Robert T. Boyd, "Another Look At The 'Fever and Ague' Of Western Oregon," *Ethnohistory* 22, no. 2 (1975): 135–36.

18. Philip Henry Overmeyer, "Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (March 1933): 28–31; Young, *Journals of Wyeth*, 79.

19. Wyeth's younger cousin John was one of those who quit. He later wrote a book criticizing Wyeth's leadership style and faulting him for recruiting young men of high society, who signed on for quick profit, and were not prepared for the extreme hardship and risks the trip entailed: John B. Wyeth, *Oregon, or a Short History of a Long Journey from the Atlantic Ocean to the Region of the Pacific by Land*, in *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846* no. 21, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1905), 28–31, 65–67.

20. Overmeyer, "Wyeth," 28–31. For a detailed listing of Wyeth's men and what happened to each of them, see: Philip Henry Overmeyer, "Members of First Wyeth Expedition,"

Oregon Historical Quarterly 36, no. 1 (March 1935), 95–101. Overmeyer was working from a list published in Cambridge prior to the group's departure: "Wyeth's Expeditions," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Portland [hereafter OHS Research Library]. Pierre's Hole is a narrow valley in Idaho, just west of the Tetons in Wyoming. This rendezvous was the largest gathering of mountain men in history, so Tibbets and others would have met Joe Meek, Robert Newell, and others who later settled in Oregon. A recent book provides comprehensive coverage of this event: Jim Hardee, *Pierre's Hole: The Fur Trade History of Teton Valley, Idaho* (Pinedale, Wyo.: Sublette County Historical Society, 2010).

21. Karen Bassett, Jim Renner, and Joyce White, *Oregon Historic Trails Report* (Salem, Ore: The Oregon Trail Coordinating Council, 1998), 104; Young, *Journals of Wyeth*, 154.

22. Powell, *Kelley on Oregon*, xiii. Frank Tebbetts (who claimed a family relationship with Calvin Tibbets) said he came from Portland, Maine: Fred Lockley, *History of the Columbia River Valley from the Dalles to the Sea* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1928), 3:434.

23. Nathaniel Wyeth had convinced his brother Jacob to join the American Society while planning his own expedition, so both are included in Wyeth's recruiting numbers, not Kelley's: Overmeyer, "Wyeth," 29. Overmeyer, "Members."

24. Powell, *Kelley on Oregon*, 308.

25. Overmeyer, "Wyeth," 30–33; Young, *Journals of Wyeth*, 56.

26. Young, *Journals of Wyeth*, 178.

27. No full length biography of Nathaniel J. Wyeth has been written. For biographical sketches of his life and expeditions, see: LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West* (Glendale, Cal.: A. H. Clark Company, 1968), 5:381–401; Overmeyer, "Wyeth," 28–48; John A. Wyeth, M.D., "Nathaniel J. Wyeth and the Struggle for Oregon," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 85, no. 510 (November 1892): 835–47. For a full length but fictional account, see: *Christian McCord, Across the Shining Mountains: The Odyssey of Nathaniel Wyeth* (Ottawa, Ill.: Jameson Books, 1986).

28. Robert Carlton Clark, *History of the Willamette Valley, Oregon* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1927), 228.

29. Oliver Tatum, "Matthew Deady (1824–1893)," *Oregon Encyclopedia*, http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/deady_mattthew_1824_1893/ (accessed January 23, 2014); Matthew P. Deady, "Annual Address," *Transactions of the Third Annual Re–Union of the Oregon Pioneer Association* (Salem, Ore: E.M. Waite, Steam Printer and Bookbinder, 1876), 24.

30. William G. Loy and others, *Atlas of Oregon*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, Ore: University of Oregon, 2001), 14.

31. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft & Company, 1884), 2:598. Bancroft personally wrote this volume according to: William Alfred Morris, "The Origin and Authorship of the Bancroft Pacific States Publications: A History of a History—I," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 4, no. 4 (1903): 287–364. Any citation to one of Bancroft's histories that Morris attributes to Francis Fuller Victor will show her as the author.

32. Archer Butler Hulbert, ed., *The Call of the Columbia: Iron Men and Saints Take the Oregon Trail* (Colorado Springs: Stewart Commission of Colorado College and Denver Public Library, 1934), xiii, 111.

33. Bassett, Renner, and White, *Trails Report*, 99, 101.

34. Powell, *Kelley on Oregon*, 99; John Ball, *Born to Wander: Autobiography of John Ball, 1794–1884*, eds. Kate Ball Powers, Flora Ball Hopkins, and Lucy Ball (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grand Rapids Historical Commission, 1994), 61.

35. Nellie Bowden Pipes, "Extract from Exploration of the Oregon Territory, the Californias, and the Gulf of California, Undertaken During the Years 1840, 1841 and 1842 by Eugene Duflot De Mofras," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 26, no. 2 (June 1925): 168. Duflot de Mofras listed seven French Canadians who had begun farming before 1833, three starting in 1833, and fifteen more from 1834 to 1837.

36. John Ball and Kate N. B. Powers, "Across the Continent Seventy Years Ago," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 3, no. 1 (March 1902): 103–04. John Ball, *Born to Wander*, 61, 63, 83–120, 155. Jean Baptist Deportes McKay was often referred to as Deputy and similar nicknames. He should not to be confused with Thomas McKay, who was a step-son of John McLoughlin and had a farm nearby: Corning, *Dictionary of Oregon History*, 161. For comprehensive coverage of the impact of the diseases of white men on the Indians of Oregon, see: Robert T. Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774–1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 242–61.

37. Powell, *Prophet of Oregon*, 148.

38. Overmeyer, "Members," 99; "Mission Record Book," MSS 1224, OHS Research Library, 16–17. These sources give only Sargent's first initial. HBC journals give his full first name: "Abstracts of Servant's Accounts," York Factory/Northern Department, B.239/g/12 (1833), 13 (1834), and 14 (1835), Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

39. Philip Henry Overmeyer, "Members of First Wyeth Expedition," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1935): 100–01. The Smiths have descendants still living in the area: "Celiast" and "Ilchee," <http://trailtribes.org/fortclatsop/celiast-and-ilchee.htm> (accessed January 14, 2014).

40. Ball, *Born to Wander*, 39–40, 60. One way in which Ball's attitude manifests itself is his never naming Tibbets, nor any others he did not see as his equal in society, or someone unique like his host McKay.

41. Shawna Lea Gandy, "Fur Trade Daughters of the Oregon Country: Students of the Sisters of Notre Dame De Namur, 1850" (master's thesis, Portland State University, 2004), 2–3. Lower case "métis" will be used throughout this article, since it takes the place of "mixed-blood" and does not refer to the Red River valley communities in Manitoba: a convention described by Gandy that seems appropriate. Other terms like "half-breed" will not be used except in direct quotes.

42. "Journal of Rev. Jason Lee," *Christian Advocate and Journal* 16 (August 25, 1841). This article is missing from historical news service databases. Corey Flick, research librarian at the Methodist Library at Duke University, was kind enough to locate it and send a digital copy by email on November 21, 2012. It is cited in: Cornelius J. Brosnan, *Jason Lee, Prophet of the New Oregon* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 162.

43. Solomon Smith recalled his friend Tibbets living with an Indian woman during the years they were on the Willamette, but said that she did not come with him to Clatsop Plains: "Probate Journal 2", Clatsop County Probate Records, Oregon State Archives, Salem, Ore, (1/17/02/07), 29. Methodist and Catholic records show no record of a formal marriage. Nor is there any record of her full first name. She was most likely Kalapuyan, since that was the tribe living in the area, and wives from other tribes were usually brought to the area with their trapper husbands.

44. "Recapitulation of Book Debts," Fort Vancouver/Columbia District, B.223/d/66 (1834), 73 (1835), 86 and 88 (1836); Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

45. Samuel Asahel Clarke, *Pioneer Days of Oregon History* (Portland, Ore.: J.K. Gill Company, 1905), 1205. Willie McKay was a son of the Thomas McKay mentioned in note 36, thus a grandson of John McLoughlin. He became a physician and settled in Pendleton. He was a student of both John Ball and Solomon Smith at Fort Vancouver: Corning, *Dictionary of Oregon History*, 161.

46. Brosnan, Jason Lee, 44–46, 72. The Methodists had accompanied Nathaniel Wyeth's second expedition most of the way. Their first mission location is now a park near Wheatland: http://www.oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp_parkPage&parkId=99, (accessed January 16, 2014).

47. Frederick V. Holman, "A Brief History of the Oregon Provisional Government and What Caused Its Formation," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 13, no. 2 (June

1912): 113–15. Holman published a list put together by George Himes (first secretary of the Oregon Pioneer Association and the Oregon Historical Society) that showed the religion of each person who voted at Champoe on May 2, 1843 on "who's for a divide." Congregationalists were most closely aligned with the Presbyterians; Methodists were a competing group. See: Congregation Library and Archives, "The Congregational Christian Tradition," <http://www.congregationallibrary.org/researchers/congregational-christian-tradition> (accessed January 27, 2014).

48. See note 45; Nellie B. Pipes, "Journal of John H. Frost, 1840–43 [Part 1]," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1934): 64. Pipes had Rev. Frost's first name wrong; it was actually Joseph: Corning, *Dictionary of Oregon History*, 94.

49. The temperance society formed by the Methodists was formed on February 11, 1836. Within a week eighteen men had joined, but their names were not recorded until January 2, 1837: Charles Henry Carey, "The Mission Record Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Willamette Station, Oregon Territory, North America, Commenced 1834," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 23, no. 2 (1922): 242, 250; for details on the Presbyterian version: *Oregon Spectator*, July 8, 1847.

50. Stephen Dow Beckham, "Oregon History: Souls to Save," *Oregon Blue Book*, <http://www.bluebook.state.or.us/cultural/history/history08.htm> (accessed January 16, 2014). What brought missions to Oregon was a story about Flathead and Nez Perce Indians journeying to St. Louis in 1831 asking for the white man's religion. This was at best a misunderstanding due to lack of proper interpretation. The tribes wanted nothing to do with white religion; they had their own belief systems that worked just fine for them: Comments by Wilson Wewa, Warm Springs Washat leader, OHS Death Symposium November 7, 2013. Additionally, the tribes were so decimated by disease brought by whites that there were soon not many to convert: White, *Misfortune*, 71.

51. Powell, *Kelley on Oregon*, xiv–xvii.

52. Bassett, Renner, and White, *Trails Report*, 94–113.

53. F. G. Young and Joaquin Young, "Ewing Young and His Estate: A Chapter in the Economic and Community Development of Oregon," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 21, no. 3 (September 1920), 230; "E. Young to Mr. Tibbets, November 3, 1837," *Willamette Cattle Company*, MSS 500, OHS Research Library; Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to present," *MeasuringWorth*, 2014, <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/> (accessed January 27, 2014)

DUTCH WAGNER, THE THREE MINUTE MAN

By the Editor

On the morning of August 15, 1919, Walter Kallunki headed to his store at 221 West Bond, a short distance away from his home in Uniontown. The combined mercantile and post office he operated served mostly Finnish people at the west end of Astoria. Few people knew that the store also served as a repository for money belonging to area residents, most of them immigrants who for one reason or another did not want to deposit their valuables in a bank.

Walter had turned off the lights and locked the store at 11 p.m. the night before and all had been well. When he returned in the morning, he found the lights on in the building, debris scattered around, and the door to his safe blown off its hinges; the contents, \$10,000 in gold, currency and liberty bonds, were gone.

Two days later the police still had no real leads to the person or persons who committed the crime. Rumors began to circulate that Walter Kallunki, owner of the building and operator of the business, had faked the burglary himself and hidden the money.

Walter was a native Astorian, the son of Johan Abram "Abraham" Kallunki, an immigrant from Kuusamo, Finland

and his wife Anna Christina Hanson from Happaranda, Sweden, on the border with Finland. Both had arrived in the U.S. in the 1870s and married in Astoria in 1879. Abraham fished for years for Astoria canneries and owned a house and lot on Washington Street in what was the original Uniontown. He passed away in 1902 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, leaving his wife and three children, Walter born in 1880, Annie in 1882 and Albert in 1883.

Walter had bought a small building, stocking it with goods. Fourteen years later it was built up into a busy department store. He was admired as one of the most successful Finnish merchants in town. His name was included among the notable businessmen in the Port of Astoria publication "Who's Who and What's What in Clatsop County, Oregon 1922." He was reported as saying "There is no other place where I would care to make my home and I know that Astoria is coming into its own and will grow into a mighty port." Walter married in 1909 and was the father of three children. Active in community affairs, he joined the Elks, the Knights of Pythias, Woodmen of the World, the Finnish Brotherhood and the Knights of the

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221 WEST BOND STREET

Walter KallunkiWHOLESALE AND RETAIL
Highest Quality**Furnishing Goods, Dry Goods, Notions
Standard Shoes for Men, Women, Misses, Boys and
Infants—Finest Stock of Loggers' and
Fishermen's Shoes**

ASTORIA,

OREGON

Kaleva. The burglary, however, cast a shadow on all he had done and as time passed more doubts were raised about his integrity.

On August 18, 1919 the *Morning Astorian* printed a story under the headline "Kallunki is Not Arrested. Widespread Rumors Branded as False by the Authorities."

In spite of widespread rumors to the effect that Walter Kallunki had been arrested in connection with the "cracking" of the safe in his store and the robbery of more than \$10,000 Saturday morning, there have been no new developments in the case so far as the police authorities are concerned. There is absolutely no truth in the story of Kallunki's arrest the police say.

The investigation is continuing, however, and the police are working on several clues, in the hopes that an arrest will be made in the near future.

The rumor of Kallunki's arrest started from the fact that he was called to an interview with District Attorney Barrett yesterday. The interview concerned the robbery but had nothing to do with any charges against Kallunki.

It is also rumored that the 18 men who are said to have lost money in the affair held a meeting yesterday morning for the purpose of discussing their own plans for tracing the robbers or at least recover a part of their holdings. Plans for legal proceedings against the owner of the store who was entrusted with the money are said to have been discussed at the meeting.

It wasn't until the end of August that some real progress was made in the case. The heading of one article in the *East Oregonian* was "THIEF'S ARREST BRINGS RELIEF TO SUSPECT." Walter Kallunki was reported as saying "The Robbery has cost me considerable money in the amount taken and the funds expended in the search, but that is nothing compared with the clearing of my name and reputation of the unjust insinuation that had been circulating about me."

Sheriff Ole Nelson and Deputy Vincent F. Bakotich assisted by Joseph Keller of Portland, chief of the theft bureau of the Pacific coast automobile underwriters conference, had been working on the case for several

weeks. They were investigating reports that safe crackers from Oregon had gone to St. Joseph, Missouri. The Chief of Police there, Thomas Moore, arrested two men, Frank Wagner and Albert Meadors, who had the reputation of being two dangerous criminals and expert safe crackers on the Pacific Coast. Along with them was James Tait described as an accessory after the fact. Deputy Bakotich first stopped by Salem to get extradition papers approved by Oregon Governor Ben Olcott before heading to Missouri.

THE SAFECRACKERS

Frank Wagner, aka Frank Weger, was a familiar person to Oregon newspaper reporters. He was generally referred to as “Dutch Wagner, the 3 minute safe cracker” due to his speed in opening safes. Frank had been sentenced to the state penitentiary for a term of one year beginning April 9, 1909, but escaped August 20th of that same year. He was captured and returned April 30, 1912, serving out the rest of his time, then discharged December 19, 1912. He was received again on April 24, 1914 for a term of 2 to 5 years for committing more crimes and was discharged April 28, 1919. Little information about his background is available. Prison records, obtained from the Oregon State Archives show that he had worked as a logger, no doubt where he got his training handling explosives.

Al Meadors, Wagner’s alleged partner in the safe-cracking at Astoria, had been found guilty of robbing an O.W.R. & N. train in the Blue Mountains and sentenced in 1914 to thirteen years Umatilla County for assault and robbery. Meadors had accompanied two others in the train robbery. One of his partners was shot and killed by officers. Meadors was later captured by the sheriff of Umatilla County. Meadors protested that he had been so frightened that he had not fired a single shot during the robbery. At a friendly meeting after their arrest, the Heppner sheriff said to them, “I am sorry for you boys that you have got into this scrape.” Meadors replied “No one is more sorry than we are. We made a mistake. So far as I am concerned this was the first and last time for Albert Meadors to figure in any such scrape as that was.” Al served only part of his sentence when he was paroled in 1918, according to an account in the *Morning Oregonian*, May 11, 1920.

Al signed his name, Albert Earl Meadors, on his World War I Draft Registration card, dated September 7, 1918, reporting that his permanent address was the Crystal Hotel on Alder and Stark in Portland and, ironically, that he was employed as a diner cook on the O.W.R. N. Co. railroad. He was born April 26, 1884, white, native born. He was of medium height and build, with brown eyes and black hair.

James Clergy, aka Tait, was a waiter in a restaurant (whether in Portland or



THE KALLUNKI FAMILY OUTSIDE THEIR STORE IN UNIONTOWN.

Astoria is not clear in the newspaper accounts). He wasn't thought to have taken part in the Kallunki burglary but was with Wagner when he and Meador were apprehended. Clergy had a criminal record too. A World War I Registration card for Clergy, dated June 5, 1917 gives his address as St. Louis, Missouri where he was born January 2, 1887 and he was working as a cook and baker. Under "place employed" was the stamp of the Oregon State Penitentiary at Salem. Clergy claimed exemption from military service due to a dependent mother. He was described as short and slender with light grey eyes and dark brown hair. It was signed by the warden of the penitentiary.

ON THE RUN

Authorities believed that after the burglary, the men left Astoria but returned a few weeks later. Concerned they were going to be captured, they purchased an auto and, taking two women with them as companions "for an immoral purpose" according to the newspapers, drove to The Dalles, then to Lava Springs, Idaho. The women returned from there to Portland, the men continuing on to St. Joseph, Missouri where they were captured.

A gun from the safe and some of the stolen gold and bonds were found when the men were arrested. The serial numbers of seven of the bonds corresponded with the list of those stolen

from Walter Kallunki's safe, confirming their involvement in the burglary.

An Astoria newspaper from September 20, 1919 praises the men who caught them.

Back of these arrests is some of the most clever detective work following a crime in the annals of Clatsop county. With practically nothing to work upon, Sheriff Nelson and his deputy, aided by Frank Keller, former state parole officer, the Portland police and the Burns detective agency have succeeded in running down the criminals, and the recovery of much of the loot, according to a telegram received Sunday by Sheriff Nelson from Police Chief Thomas Moore, of St. Joseph. The first clue obtained by Sheriff Nelson was from a local man who sold the alleged yeggmen an automobile. This car was sold for \$750 of which \$500 was paid in a liberty bond and the remainder in gold and currency both silver and paper."

Note: "Yeggmen" is an old term for "safe-crackers."

The prisoners, not wanting to return to Astoria for trial, started *habeas corpus* (being unlawfully detained) proceedings which were set for a hearing before the court in Missouri, but by October 13th they were back in Astoria. The next day the photos of Frank Wagner and Al Meadors appeared in the newspapers under the heading "TWO EX-CONVICTS ARRESTED IN MISSOURI CHARGED WITH ASTORIA ROBBERY." Frank Wagner was reported as saying, "Well, the other boys had nothing to do with it

**TWO EX-CONVICTS ARRESTED IN MISSOURI CHARGED WITH
ASTORIA ROBBERY.**



ALBERT MEADORS

FRANK WAGNER

[the burglary], anyway. I don't care what happens to me, but I want to clear Meadors and Clergy. They are innocent." The *Morning Oregonian* titled the story "BOY WOULD CLEAR PALS," characterizing the thirty-five year old Wagner as "ASTORIA YOUTH HELD FOR BIG THEFT CLEVER ONE." When asked about blowing the safe, Wagner "made no direct denial of having robbed the safe...however by inference, he intimated that he intended to assume the blame and make an effort to clear his companions. When asked why he had bored so many holes in the floor at the store when there was a trapdoor which could be raised easily to gain

entrance from the basement Wagner replied, "I was taking no chances. You know there might have been a wire with a bell at the end attached to that door that would have given an alarm. It doesn't pay to take such a risk."

A hearing for Meadors and Clergy was set for the following Friday afternoon. Their bonds were fixed at \$5000 each. Meadors said he had witnesses who would prove that he was in Portland at the time of the burglary, Mrs. Robert Lowe the operator of a restaurant where he was, and the night cook and dishwasher.

Clergy was also prepared with an alibi but since he wasn't complicit

in the actual crime, an alibi wasn't needed.

Officers speculated that Wagner wasn't just trying to protect his pals, but was doing this in the hope they might not be held as witnesses in the case against him.

WAGNER'S CONFESSION

On the night of October 18th, Frank Wagner made a full confession in Justice of the Peace Frank J. Carney's court in Astoria. "I did the job and I did it alone," he said. "I watched Kallunki leave the store shortly before 11 o'clock that night and then I went to work. I waded through the water to reach the basement of the building and got wet to my arm pits. After I pulled the job, I went back and got a pair of pants, some shoes and a vest so as to have dry clothes." Attorney Fulton cross-examined Wagner. His responses caused the audience to laugh. "You are a pretty good cracksman are you not?" asked Attorney Fulton.

"Didn't you see some of my work?" came back the reply with a snap.

"...I supposed someone helped you," said the attorney.

"No one helped me, there was no one watching on the outside and I bored the holes to get through because to break partitions makes too much noise," was the answer.

Wagner went on to explain "I met Meadors when we were both serving time in the penitentiary, but had not seen him for more than a year until I

ROBBERS WHO ARE HELD FOR BIG JOB AT ASTORIA



Albert Meadors, above, who held up
a train in 1914 and was suspected

of robbing Kallunki store of \$10,000. Frank Wagner, below, who took entire blame for burglary.



HOTEL GEARHART BY THE SEA, GEARHART, OREG, FRA



ANK WOODFIELD PHOTO, CA 1890S SEE STORY PAGE 45.

met him in Astoria shortly before noon on Sunday, August 17th, two days after the robbery. He had absolutely nothing to do with the robbery and was not in Astoria at that time.

“No one gave me a tip about Kallunki’s store. I just took a chance but I didn’t expect to get over \$300 or \$400. I used common dynamite to blow the door and I never counted the money. I didn’t care enough about it.

“After the robbery I walked under the roadway for a long distance, then changed my clothes, hid the principal part of the money and, coming into the roadway, walked into town. I met a motorcycle cop on the way. That afternoon I went back and brought the balance of the money and liberty bonds in a satchel.”

Asked if he had spent the whole \$8000 that was stolen, Wagner said “It was mine. I paid for it by serving five years in the penitentiary. You didn’t find much of it on me, did you? It was all spent excepting what you have and \$180 of that belongs to Meadors. He won it shooting craps. I never carry a burglar’s kit. I have no use for them in my line. The heavy satchel you inquire about contained something more dangerous than burglar’s tools. There were six quarts of whiskey in it.”

Wagner then said that he invited Meadors to take a trip with him. He heard Missouri was a good state and planned to go there and open a restaurant and engage in bootlegging. Asked if Meadors helped him make a

get-away, he replied, “I should say not. I have made many a get-away and didn’t need any assistance this time. Meadors was simply my guest on the trip and I paid all the expenses.

“James Clergy helped me sell a liberty bond in Omaha, but Meadors was not implicated in any way. Clergy was always dissatisfied and wanted me to give him some money and bonds. He is off in his head. I was helping him because I said I would when I thought he was a different man than he is, and I always keep my word. That’s why I’m here now.”

DISCREPANCIES

Some questions arose over Wagner’s testimony. He said that the burglary was committed at 11 p.m. on August 15th and he was compelled to wade through waist deep water to reach the basement of the store. It was noted that it was low tide after 10 p.m. and that the beach was dry 200 feet out from the shore. In addition, he said that he was alone during the burglary, but two sets of tracks were found in the sand.

Clatsop County Judge Eakin summoned the grand jury to begin. Concern rose immediately because of expenses involved in pursuing the case. It had already cost the county \$600 in railroad fares. (Relative real cost is estimated in 2014 to be \$8210.) District Attorney Jasper Barrett hoped to avoid a long trial and the necessity of bringing witnesses all the way from Missouri and other parts of the state.

It was decided not to prosecute the women in the case to avoid the extra cost though the men in the case were said to be violators of the Mann act, the law that made it a “felony to engage in interstate or foreign commerce transport of any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose.” (The women had gone with Wagner and Meadors across the border from Oregon into Idaho.)

On October 24th the grand jury returned an indictment against Frank Wagner charging him with “larceny by use of explosives.” He refused to plead and asked that an attorney be named to represent him. The court appointed William Miller for him—The next day Wagner pleaded “not guilty” in order to avoid the penalty as the crime would mean a term of imprisonment with a maximum of 40 years. Wagner’s attorney said that if the state were willing he would plead guilty to burglary in a house, which had a maximum of 15 years’ imprisonment. “District Attorney Barrett responded that he would not agree to that. The case was set for trial on December 1.

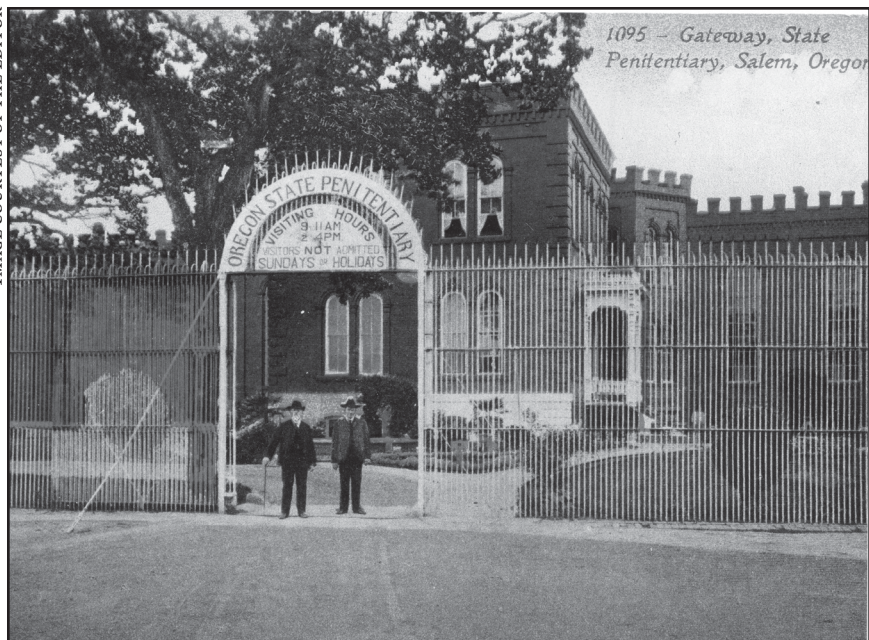
The grand jury was still in the process of considering the case against Albert Meadors and James Clergy. Both men were sent back to the state penitentiary, Meadors to finish serving his sentence. He had about ten years to serve of the 13 years he was given for the 1914 train robbery, more than what he would have been given

under the charges made against him in Astoria. Clergy had broken his parole and was sent back to serve one year remaining on his original sentence for burglary in Multnomah County. On the afternoon of October 27th, Meadors was charged by the circuit court with being an accessory after the fact to larceny by the use of explosives. Not a true bill was returned in the case against James Clergy. James Mott, an Astoria attorney, (later a U.S. Senator) called on Governor Olcott on behalf of Al Meadors to try, unsuccessfully, to get him released from prison.

The same day Frank Wagner pleaded guilty to an indictment charging him with larceny by the use of explosives and given an indeterminate sentence with a maximum of 40 years in the penitentiary. He would not be eligible for parole until he served nine years and seven months.

On November 1, 1919, the *Morning Oregonian* newspaper reported that a reward had been paid for apprehension of “Dutch” Frank Wagner to Anna Bryant, the proprietor of a lodging house at Astoria. She had given authorities information regarding to Frank’s whereabouts in Missouri.

Finally, on November 14, the recovered stolen valuables were returned to Walter Kallunki by order issued from Judge Eakin in Astoria. It included \$1050 in government bonds, \$152 in currency, \$20 in gold, a watch chain with a 20-mark Finnish gold coin, and a revolver taken from Frank Wagner,



OREGON STATE PENITENTIARY, SALEM, OREGON.

VISITING HOURS 9-11 AM, 2-4 PM.

VISITORS **NOT** ADMITTED SUNDAYS OR HOLIDAYS.

a gold watch and chain found in the possession of Al Meadors, and \$500 in bonds, and a \$2.50 gold piece.

Kallunki's woes were not over yet. Charles Yates filed suit in circuit court against him for reward money when it had already been paid to Anna Bryant. Yates claim was that on August 23 Kallunki announced in an advertisement that he would pay a reward of \$1000 "for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the robbers." He said that information he gathered led to the arrest of three men including Frank Wagner who confessed to the burglary. Kallunki responded that Yates was committing conspiracy to defraud him. He said that he

(Kallunki) had employed Joe Keller, a detective to assist the local officers in finding the criminals. Keller in turn employed Edward Twing and at his request employed Yates to work on the case. Twing and Yates received \$10 a day plus expenses. Kallunki said that he had paid about \$1000 for these expenses to Yates and Twing and they never furnished any information about the criminals. Kallunki was left with a large bill still to pay.

Meanwhile the Marion County grand jury returned an indictment against Frank Wagner for robbing the stores of Syring and Banks and Julius Alm at Silverton on the night of July 15, 1919. On January 5, 1920, the

Marion County Circuit Court for the State of Oregon held a proceeding against Frank Wagner. Wagner pled guilty to the crime as charged, asking the Court to pass sentence upon him at once. It was decided to send him to the penitentiary for the period of five years, running the sentence concurrent with his sentence under which he had already been imprisoned.

MEADORS' ESCAPE FROM THE OREGON STATE PENITENTIARY

Wagner, Meadors and Clergy were all safely in the state penitentiary with plenty of time to reflect on their crimes. Then, on the night of May 10, 1920, Al Meadors and W. J. Jenkins, who had been at work as a trustees in the Aumsville wood camp, escaped from the camp but were captured at Mill City about twenty-two miles away. Their capture was negotiated by "Cherokee" James, a guard of the Oregon State Penitentiary. According to the *Morning Oregonian* "Penitentiary officials expressed surprise at Meadors' escape, as he only recently received intimation from the parole board that his release was under consideration."

FRANK WAGNER'S BID FOR FREEDOM

For several months Frank Wagner had been a model prisoner and allowed to work in a brickyard outside the main prison walls. Then on September 21, 1920, when the gate was opened tempo-

rarily to admit a truck, Frank Wagner along with Earl Riley, took off running. The guards opened fire, but failed to hit the men. They were unable to go after the two because no one would have been left to watch the other convicts who could have also escaped. By the time they got reinforcements, Wagner and Riley were in the broad forests east of Salem. Guards were stationed on all the main highways with city and county officers looking for them. Photographs and descriptions were sent out. Because Wagner and Riley were labeled "gunmen," the warning went out to approach them with caution and not to take "any unnecessary chances bringing about their capture."

Riley was free only four days. He was captured in Portland and from him it was learned that the two men had hidden in the woods until dark. They then walked to the state industrial school for girls where they remained in the garage attic until Sept. 23rd, eating food stolen from the state institution and pears from the state orchard. They stole an automobile and drove to Milwaukie where they abandoned it.

Years before, Earl Riley had been arrested in Portland for stealing an automobile. He had been tried and then released by a sympathetic judge when Riley promised the court that he would go straight and never steal again. The *Morning Oregonian* later reported: "From the courtroom Riley walked to the street where he stole

another automobile and made his escape.”

MORE SAFE CRACKING

Wagner was still on the loose when the Scottsburg post office and store safe was burglarized of more than \$2500 in cash and liberty bonds. Officials suspected the “three minute safe man” Dutch Wagner was responsible as the method used to crack the safe was like the one he used in Astoria. A posse was formed to track him down, searching the woods near Scottsburg. Wagner eluded officers. It was theorized that he drifted down the Umpqua River in one of the boats at a landing, apparently wrecking and setting adrift the remaining boats so he could not be followed. It appeared that he then hopped on a freight train from Reedsport and could have gone anywhere from there. For almost two months, nothing was seen of Frank Wagner.

POSSE FROM THE OREGON STATE PENITENTIARY

Warden Compton of the Oregon State Penitentiary, thinking Wagner might return to the Astoria area, had stationed an officer here to keep a lookout for him. The officer saw Wagner and reported the discovery. A posse was immediately rounded up headed by L. H. Compton, warden; Percy M. Vardney, parole officer; E. C. Halley, principal keeper; Emery James, Robert Gibson, Louis Hubbard, John Davidson and Sol Worden,

guards, all from the penitentiary and H. Christofferson and A. C. Schirmer, deputy sheriffs from Multnomah County. They arrived in Clatsop County on the morning of December 20, 1920 and about noon they reached the blacksmith shop at the English ranch near Columbia Beach where it was later said that Wagner had been working in the shop making tools for use in cracking safes.

The officers took positions around the building and one of them called out to Wagner to come out with his hands up and surrender. Wagner, who had said he would never take a life except in self-defense, stepped to the door with a weapon in his hand, spotted one of the officers and shot twice, missing both times. Guns held by members of the posse answered, and riddled the building. Two of the bullets struck Wagner, one through his right cheek, passing through his head and emerging above the ear. The other entered the left side of his abdomen, traveling upward and coming out of his right arm. Wagner fell dead. His body was turned over to Coroner E. B. Hughes.

ACCOMPLICES

The property where Frank Wagner was killed was either owned or rented by Dean English who was arrested for harboring a fugitive from justice. English took officers to an old barn nearby where some of the stolen money was hidden. They also found \$6550 in liberty bonds that had been

stolen from the Scottsburg bank. Accomplices arrested on the charges of harboring a fugitive from justice and aiding in his escape were: Mrs. Anita Schroeder, alias Anita Sherman, Mrs. Dean English and Ed Heflinger. Investigation was by District Attorney Barnett and Sheriff Nelson. Sworn statements showed that Wagner had been staying at the English home in Delora [DeLaura] Beach since November 5. In between short trips away by Wagner, Mrs. Schroeder had visited him there. She was formerly the “girlfriend” of Wagner’s partner, Earl Meadors. Mrs. Schroeder/Sherman told the district attorney that Wagner had drawn a map of where he had hidden a cache of money and war savings stamps near Gardiner, Oregon. That was later recovered by authorities.

Dean English and his wife admitted that Wagner had been staying at their place on De Laura Beach. When asked why they allowed a bank robber to stay there, Mrs. English replied “I wanted to get all the money out of him that I could before turning him over to the authorities.”

Another search of the property was made by Sheriff Nelson and Deputy Bakotich who found two sticks of dynamite and a can of nitro-glycerine, hidden in a barn, along with burglar tools.

BURIAL OF DUTCH WAGNER

The Hughes Mortuary record states Frank Wagner (Dutch Frank), date

of Death December 19, 1920, age 35 years old, Shot by Penitentiary, died De Laura Beach, parents names not known, no funeral services, place of burial Riverview, date of burial Dec. 20, 1920 at 11 a.m. \$10.00 was paid for the cemetery lot and \$5.00 for opening the grave. Wagner was buried in a \$75.00 “Clatsop Bronze” coffin. An ambulance and a hearse were employed in moving the body for a charge of \$30.00. A headboard, costing \$1.50 was added, all totaled \$136.50. Riverview Cemetery, now known as Lewis and Clark Cemetery, is located about six miles south of Astoria on the east side of the Lewis & Clark River. The cemetery had been burned over several times in an attempt to kill the blackberries. The exact location of his grave is unknown.

Senate Bill 343 was proposed by Norblad authorizing Clatsop county to pay Walter Kallunki expenses paid by him for apprehending Frank Wagner. (Unknown if it passed.)

Walter Kallunki continued operating his department store in Uniontown until about 1932 when he opened a new store: Kallunki’s Cash Store at 223 W. Bond. By 1935, the family had moved to Reedsport, Oregon. On the 1940 census, Walter’s wife was not living with him and he was working as a night watchman. His only income was \$600 a year and he had a house valued at \$150. The Great Depression was perhaps responsible for these changes in living standard.



KNIGHTS OF KALEVA TIERA LODGE NO. 9, ASTORIA, OREGON

1st row: WILLIAM MANNILA, CHAS. JOHNSON, EMIL NYMAN (SHOE STORE, CLERK), ALFRED PUUSTI (PUUSTI & CO.) 2nd row: ABEL KARVONEN, WALTER KALLUNKI, DR. E. E. PAJUNEN (DENTIST), HENRY V. NIEMI (BUILDER), FABIAN TOLONEN, (EDITOR OF *Lannen Suometar* — now *Columbia Press*), RICHARD WIRKKUNEN, JOHN LUUKKINEN, HENRY TOIKKA (HOTEL), ARTHUR TILANDER (HOME BAKERY) 3rd row: CHAS. THOMPSON (GROCERY STORE), KRIS WUORI (CUSTOM CANNERY), (TAILOR), HENRY KAUPPI, UNIDENTIFIED, JACK DAVIS, ? HALONEN, ? LAAKSO, 8. GUST HELLBERG (DRUGGIST) 4th row: CHAS. LAITY, JOHN PENTTILA, CHAS. KIMINKI, ? SANKI, OSCAR BERG, SVEN LONBERG (HOTEL & BATHS), UNIDENTIFIED, JOHN ANDERSON (PLUMBER), ? ANTTILA.

The obituary for Walter Kallunki is available through "Find a Grave" on the internet, titled "Former Police Officer Dies." He died August 11, 1942 in Florence. He moved to Reedsport in 1933 from Astoria. After moving he worked in the fisheries, then as deputy marshal, but left due to poor health. "He was known and respected as an efficient, trustful and competent officer and many friends were very sorry that he could not continue in service with the city." He then moved to Florence where he had a roadside store and restaurant."

The prison record for Frank Wagner is available from the Oregon State Archives in Salem. A copy of the record includes a letter from Glenn Calhoun:

Portland Ore

Jan 8, 1934

Dear Sir:

I want to know about a man that was supposed to be a safe cracker and robber.

This story sounds like an old mans dream. I will tell you briefly the story.

Some years ago perhaps between 1914 and 1918. This man a German

robbed several safes. Eventually he was caught. Some years later he escaped and was followed to the scene where he had some bonds hidden. He was shot and killed there. But most of his loot never being found.

I know enough about the circumstances to find the rest of it, with some help from you. I will expect a large percentage of it for finding it. Of course I may not know where it is but we will see.

Confidentially Yours

Glenn Calhoun

1334 S. W. College

Portland, Ore.

P. S. At least answer my letter and let me know if you think there is any truth in this at all. I have forgotten the convicts name. If I heard it I would know it. [added note:] This mans name was Wagner

The warden of the State Penitentiary, J. W. Lewis, responded that Wagner may have buried loot anywhere in the state. ✍

Note: Does anyone know where the English home was on De Laura Beach Road? Just wondering...

REPORT OF FORT STEVENS SHELLING FIFTY YEARS AGO

By Victoria Lamb

LAST JUNE my neighbor, Charlotte Cameron, saw me by my mail box and, knowing I hadn't been feeling well, stopped to ask how I was. She said she had to go home and get ready to go up to Fort Stevens in a couple of hours. She had received a letter from a person trying to locate someone who had lived in this area at the time of the shelling. I told her to tell him that the marker on the Delaura Beach Road was not the first shell. Sometime after 11 P.M., we heard a whistling sound right over the Columbia Beach Road along side our property and that was what brought my husband and me to our feet. We ran to the north window and got there just in time to see the flash as the shell left the submarine, and again when it hit. I finally reminded my husband that we were doing exactly what we had been instructed not to do at sessions down at the Pioneer Church. They said for anyone who had small children to take them to the basement if they had one, and put them under something sturdy like laundry trays, and for us to stand under a heavy door beam if possible. My husband didn't approve of that idea at all and wasn't about to

take any chances of having the house come down on top of us. His suggestion was to get in the car and drive it across the road to where there was a high wide sand dune. Any shell that would clear that would land far enough away so as not to be any hazard to us. As it turned out, the shelling stopped before we took any action.

To this day, I still have part of a sack of sand in the attic that we were advised to have handy in case of incendiary bombs. I also have the two blackout frames my husband made for our kitchen. We were not allowed to have any lights showing, so we closed all the other doors and spent our evenings in the kitchen, as it had the fewest windows to cover.

When long convoys of army trucks came down from Fort Stevens to go to Camp Clatsop, now called Rilea, the lead car had dim lights on and all others had to follow close behind. At that time, the Ridge Road was a narrow gravel road and work had been started to widen and pave it, with the intention of continuing it to Camp Rilea, without having to go up to Highway 101. Not far from where it joins the Columbia Beach Road is a sign that says the road narrows. That's because, at



THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE I-25, UNDER THE COMMAND OF TAGAMI MEIJI, SURFACED NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER, OREGON ON THE NIGHT OF JUNE 21 AND JUNE 22, 1942, AND FIRED SEVERAL EXPLOSIVE SHELLS TOWARD FORT STEVENS. THIS CRATER WAS LEFT BY ONE OF THE SHELLS. MAN AT FAR RIGHT IS COL. DONEY, FORT COMMANDER.

that point, the war ended and they saw no need of spending more money.

What a relief to know the war was over, because we never knew when we heard planes flying over at night, if they were friend or foe! Everyone was happy to no longer have food rationed and gasoline was especially difficult to come by. My husband was Deputy Collector of Customs in Astoria and he and a banker, who lived on the other side of Smith Lake, took turns driving a week at a time. We had made a big effort to save enough gasoline vouchers to make a short trip down the coast, to celebrate our wedding anniversary, and we were puzzled by the large number of cars on the road. We stopped at a filling station to make sure we had enough gas to get home, and when my husband handed him our gas coupons, he said he didn't need them because the war was over.

It was part of my husband's job to censor all mail coming in from foreign countries. Since most of it was in a foreign language, he had to find someone to translate for him.

Mrs. Cameron insisted I was the one who should go up to meet this fellow who had contacted her, because she had never seen any of the shelling. She was just a young girl living with her parents in Hammond, and had heard the noise but didn't know what it was. She said she and her husband, Stewart, would pick me up in a couple of hours. She located the person who had written to her and introduced him to me. When he knew I had actually seen this happen I was asked

a lot of questions. After a while, he surprised me by asking if it would be okay if they came out to my place to photograph and make sound effects of where I was when I saw this. I agreed and they came out here with a big van full of supplies. There were at least six young fellows, and they spent so much time to make sure the light and sound effects were okay. They had me stand on the ground near the house and then started asking me a few questions and had me turn and point to the window where my husband and I had stood when we watched the shelling.

After that, they interviewed Mrs. Cameron and there were many others interviewed at Fort Stevens. It is my understanding that this audio-video is to be shown as part of a program at the Military Museum at Fort Stevens.

All the neighbors who lived near me then have passed away but one. She is Jean McNett, who now lives in the Gresham area. She can testify to the fact that I was sure the first shell went right over the Columbia Beach Road. She had been to some event in Astoria and had been dropped off by friends at the top of the hill, and was walking home sometime around 11 P.M. She hadn't reached home yet when she heard this whining sound right over her head, and then a terrific bang. All she could think of was a car accident on the highway.

We heard later that a couple of brothers and their families, who lived a few miles east of the highway, claimed that first shell went right between their homes and landed in a dune beyond



THE MARKER READS: ON JUNE 21, 1942, A 5.5" SHELL EXPLODED HERE, ONE OF 17 FIRED AT COLUMBIA RIVER HARBOR DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS BY THE JAPANESE SUBMARINE I-25, THE ONLY HOSTILE SHELLING OF A MILITARY BASE ON THE U.S. MAINLAND DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE FIRST SINCE THE WAR OF 1812.

them. The Japanese claimed later to have set off 17 shells, but could only account for 5 or 7 of them. Now I have the satisfaction of knowing I was correct when I said I was sure the spot where the marker is was not the first shell.

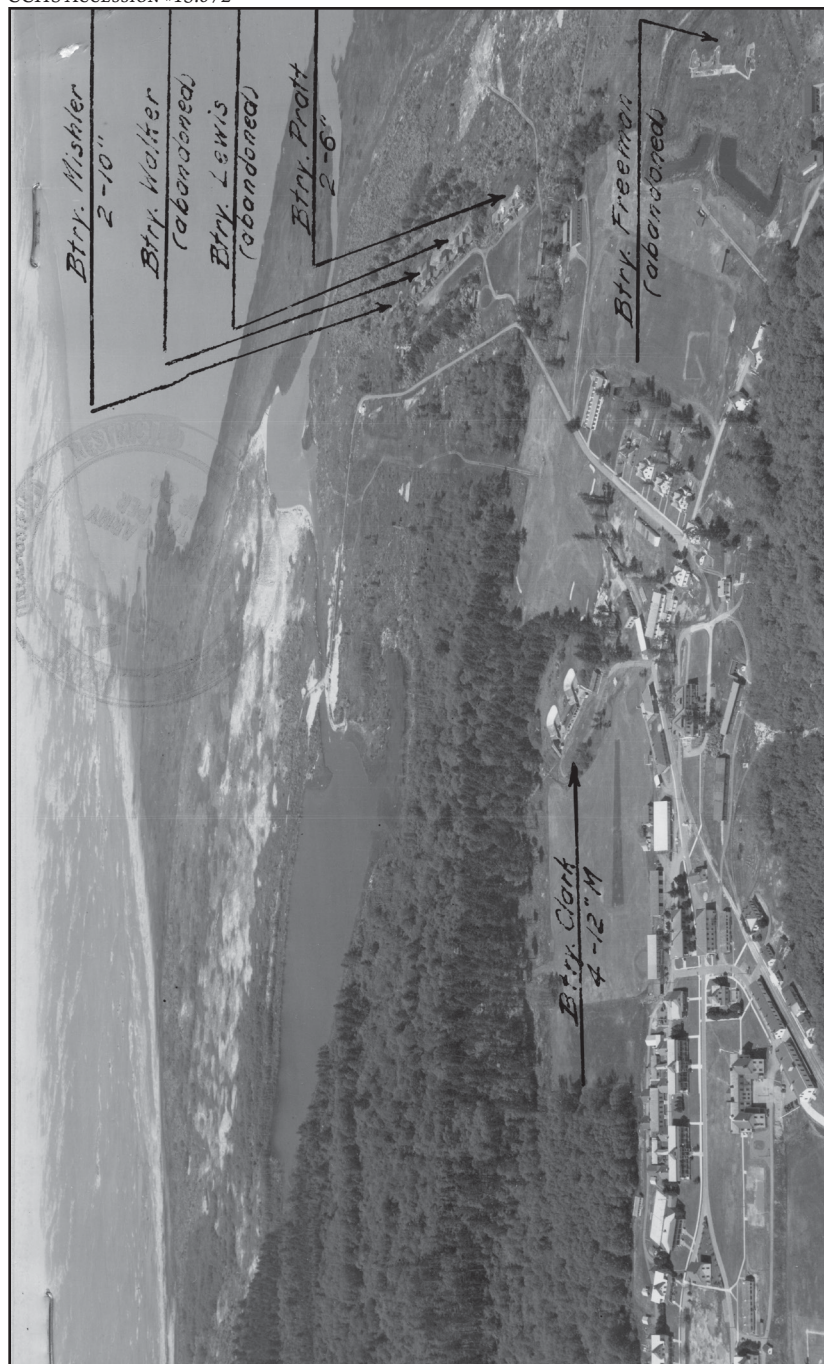
Several years after this happened, my husband and I visited the Smithsonian Institute, and they had an account of the Japanese shelling on a pillar there. When we finished reading it, another couple stepped over to read it. When they finished, the fellow turned to his wife and, very disgustedly, told her that he didn't believe a word of it. We

were still standing close by, looking at Lindbergh's plane, and I decided I'd better inform that fellow. I told him I came from that part of Oregon, and that one of the shells hit within walking distance of my home, which surprised him. I told him if he ever came to the Warrenton area, to ask where the marker was, and he could read all about it himself. Then both he and his wife turned around and read the article again. ✍

The film can be seen at the Fort Stevens Historical Site and Military Museum, 1900 Ocean Drive, Warrenton, Or 97121, phone 503-861-1470.



FORT STEVENS. TAKEN MAY 13, 1938 AT 11:20 AM, LOOKING EAST



FORT STEVENS. TAKEN MAY 13, 1938 AT 11:30 AM, LOOKING WEST



FORT STEVENS. TAKEN MAY 13, 1938 AT 11:30 AM, LOOKING WEST



FORT STEVENS. TAKEN JANUARY 13, 1942 AT 2:45 PM, NOTE BATTERY FREEMAN APPEARS TO BE FILLED AND COVERED BY SAND

FORT STEVENS—HAMMOND

CIVIL WAR

By Pat Miller

“NOTHING IN the world can breathe life into that contract. It is void and dead, it never had any life and can never have any under the law.” So said Attorney Alvin W. Norblad to Judge Howard K. Zimmerman, Clatsop County Circuit Court Judge. The date, January 6, 1953. Attorney Norblad was referring to a contract between the Town of Hammond and its Mayor, Merton E. Olney, for the purchase and sale of the Fort Stevens military installation.

Some 30 odd years previous the Olney family and the Matteson family, related to the Olneys by marriage, had with their children starved out of the Saskatchewan Prairie in Canada and migrated to Hammond, Oregon. Merton Olney and his wife Lucile had been in the horse business and Addie Matteson and his wife Ruth, Merton's sister, were in the cattle business. The Mattesons continued in the meat and cattle business in Clatsop County through the next generation. Life was hard on the prairie by any standard. Living in a one room hut, raising a family had to be difficult in the best of times and it got worse for the Olneys when cars replaced horses. When they left Saskatchewan Merton

had to simply turn his horses loose. Traveling south in a wagon during a blizzard the family once took shelter under their wagon. During the night a range cow crawled under the wagon for some shelter as well. “Get that thing out of here” yelled one uncle. One of the others retorted, “Leave it alone, that's the first time tonight I've been warm.” So it went.

The Olney family arrived in Hammond in 1926 where Merton found work as a surfman in the U.S. Coast Guard. The \$90 per month a surfman earned could and did with careful budgeting support a family. The Olneys and their four children remained in Hammond where Merton and Lucile lived out their lives. Merton was quite enterprising, and after one hitch in the Coast Guard, he worked as a builder and a plumbing contractor. During prohibition he had a short and unsuccessful career as a “bootlegger.” To the great embarrassment and hardship of Lucile and the family, Merton was caught and did a few months in prison. Years later he still claimed to have made the best whiskey in Clatsop County. The family lived down the bootlegging incident and Merton was active in local

affairs, being president of the school board and elected and re-elected several times as Hammond's mayor.

On December 7, 1941 the country became embroiled in World War II. A Japanese submarine fired at Fort Stevens and the two Olney sons, Lawrence and Jimmy, went to war. The two daughters married and their husbands went to war. Those were busy and eventful days for everyone. The War ended. In 1949, the General Services Administration (GSA) declared Fort Stevens surplus property. The Town of Hammond was given the first right to purchase the Fort and its lands. The town, however, had no funds or funding means with which to purchase the property.

Enter Mayor Merton E. Olney. He, together with his close friends and business associates, Jacob and Edith Bosshart, devised a plan to purchase the Fort property through the Town of Hammond. This seemed like a good idea to everyone. The town would get one of the barracks buildings as a school. The streets would be part of the town as would the entire Fort acreage. The price was \$54,000 and the town got a much needed school. Merton and Lucile, though intelligent people, were not as sophisticated as most of us are today. They didn't recognize the blatant conflict of interest it would be for a sitting mayor to contract with his town. Even so, everything went well for a couple of years. Then one or two town's folk got to thinking,

possibly a little jealously, that that was really a "good deal" those Olney's got. Can he really do that as Mayor?? Thus the lawsuit, first mentioned above, was born.

The Olneys, both Merton and Lucile, were very much liked and respected by most, if not all who knew them. Some 90 plaintiffs were involved in the lawsuit against the Olneys. The town was split about in half. One writer for the *Astorian Budget* referred to this controversy as the "Hammond Civil War." The lawsuit was bitter. One older Finnish lady who was in the forefront of the attack, when asked in court about the money and work that the Olneys had put into the Fort purchase, was heard to say "Vel dey vil yust hafta loos dat." The Court did not agree and ruled that the town must "do equity" and repay the Olneys and Bossharts if it was to take back the property.

Early in the proceedings Merton had resigned as mayor. It was left to the town council to determine how best to resolve the conflict. The town still had no funds to purchase the properties. In 1949 dollars the cost was over half a million in today's money. Under the Olney deal the town got a much needed new school at no cost. Pursuant to the Court's ruling the town would have been required to repay what the Olneys had invested, which was something they were unable to do. The Court gave the town two years to make the repayment and



NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER'S QUARTERS IN FORT STEVENS, CA. 1936

take back the Fort. The two years came and went. The council decided, having little choice and after all getting a free school building, to go ahead with the deal. Thus, the original deal and void contract was carried out and the Olneys and Bossharts were able to keep Fort Stevens.

Merton and Lucile resided in the old commanding officer's quarters for the rest of their lives with succeeding

generations of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren calling Fort Stevens home.

In modern times the Fort properties have been sold and resold. The Town of Hammond has been annexed to the City of Warrenton, but the people living in the many homes on the subdivided Fort lands and in the original officer's quarters share a common history with Merton and Lucile Olney. ♪

THE GEARHART HOTEL AND WW II

By Annalou B. Thomas
(Written in 2001)

FIFTY-SEVEN YEARS ago, [71] the USS *Thetis Bay*, a Kaiser baby carrier*, docked for ten days in Astoria. The ship was on a “shake down” cruise from Bremerton, Washington to San Diego, California, before going to fight in the Pacific.

Ten Navy wives were making the trip south to be with their husbands in each port. Astoria did not have accommodations so the Captain went to the manager of the Gearhart Hotel to ask to rent rooms. Since it was late April, the hotel was open only for dinner – no guests for lodging before June. The manager finally agreed that if each wife were responsible for cleaning her own room and bath and helping with maintenance chores, it would be feasible.

The wives were allowed to go to the great old kitchen to prepare their own breakfasts and at noon we walked on the beach to Seaside for lunch.

Duties involved maintaining a fire in the huge lobby fireplace, working the switchboard and running the elevators. Our husbands joined us for the nights and enjoyed dinner in the gracious dining room.

The Gearhart Hotel was then in its fourth decade and it was like an English country manor. Standing on

the dunes of the Pacific, it was a majestic structure furnished with wooden turn-of-the century appointments.

The ship’s doctor was married to Claudette Colbert, the well-known movie star, who worked the switchboard as her extra duty. A highlight was Jack Benny, Mary Livingstone and Rochester stopping one morning for coffee. The entertainers were driving to Seattle to entertain the troops. Gathered around the fireplace, the Bennys put on a rehearsal of the future show.

This was such an unusual period in time, and it is important that the Gearhart Hotel be remembered for the hospitable part it played in the history of World War II.

Returning to Astoria in July [2000] was a thrill. I regret that the Gearhart Hotel was torn down but in my memory, it was a glorious host.

*Note: The *Thetis Bay* was a small U.S. Navy ship from Kaiser Shipbuilding Co. in Vancouver, Washington. It was launched in 1944 and decommissioned in 1964 when it was sold for scrap.

Annalou B. Thomas now resides in South Carolina.



ABOVE: CLAUDETTE COLBERT CUTTING THE CAKE AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF THE *USS THETIS BAY*, ASSISTED BY CAPTAIN DONALD E. WILCOX.

APRIL 21, 1944.

BELOW: CLAUDETTE WITH HER HUSBAND, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOEL PRESSMAN, SHIP'S MEDICAL OFFICER, SEATED AT FAR RIGHT. TO HER RIGHT IS CAPTAIN DONALD E. WILCOX.





ABOVE: CLAUDETTE COLBERT AT GEARHART IN 1944.

BELOW: JACK BENNY, MARY LIVINGSTONE, AND EDDIE ANDERSON (ROCHESTER)



PHOTO FROM WEB SITE: HUPAGES.COM/ENTERTAINMENT/JACK-BENNY-THE-SATCHEL-PAIGE-OF-COMEDY

Letters to the Editor...

THE GIRLS' HOME

Joanne Rubio wrote to ask for help on the following. She was referred to Dan Hess who lives not far from the Lewis & Clark School and generously helped with information. If anyone else remembers the place she lived, please let us know more.

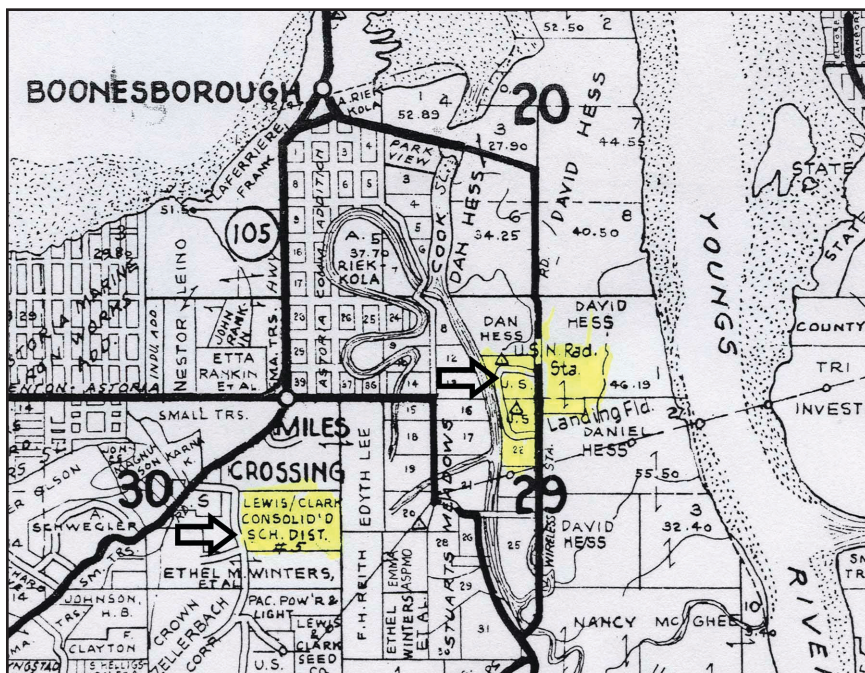
I am writing in hopes that I can get some information about the Lewis & Clark School in 1958, Astoria, Oregon.

I began first grade in 1958 at the school, but moved to northern

Washington and did not complete
1st grade there.

We lived on the outskirts of Astoria at a Girls Home surrounded by high fences. I have some photos of that site. The school bus picked up seven of us kids to go to school every day. They also picked up the girls staying at the home that went to the Junior or High School.

My sister called to let me know that she found my report card from the 1958-1959 school year while looking through family items. She is sending



THE ARROWS ON THIS 1997 METSKER MAP INDICATE THE LOCATIONS OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK SCHOOL AND THE HESS FAMILY PROPERTIES.

it to me soon. I hope it is a clue to finding out where that Girls Home was and more about "Lewis and Clark School, District 5".

I would be glad to correspond with a researcher to share information/pictures.

When my sister sends the report I'll have a better idea of what is on it.

Also, my grandfather and grandmother ran a store down in main Astoria sometime in the mid-1950s. I'll have to look up information about where that was. It was a second-hand store.

Thank you for taking the time to read this correspondence and I hope to hear from someone when they have the time.

Joanne Rubio (Family name: Brill)

THANKS SO MUCH

Hi Liisa:

It is almost a decade ago, I was asking for help to find out facts about my lost great-uncle Lauri, an Astorian, and you were the first to offer help and information. I think that now, when the destiny of Lauri Lahtinen has finally been uncovered, you have the right to hear from the result.

After the great fire in Astoria, he had found a new home in Kelso, married a Finnish immigrant girl, Aune Vataja in 1927, but the couple had no luck. Their firstborn and only child Anne died in infancy and was buried in Longview cemetery in 1928. Soon thereafter,

Lauri was taken to a sanatorium in Portland, with tuberculosis. He died in Portland in July 1930 and was buried in the same grave with their baby girl. He may have been suffering from TB for a while already, and maybe did not want to let his folks at home get worried - hence the vanishing act.

I got help from a Californian genealogist last year to get the pieces together. The decisive factor was a document about his name change from Lauri Sakari Lahtinen to Lauri Oscar Lahti, but when this was clear, the rest of the puzzle was much easier. The library in Longview was able to scan and send Lauri's obit. Now I might even make a trip to the cemetery in Longview and really end my quest some day. Although, Lauri's cousins that came over on the same ship with him, need to be traced...

Funny thing that during this ten year time in search for my dad's uncle and cousins, I've reconnected to dozens of my relations all over the US, from California to Florida and Massachusetts, but they are all connected from my mother's side, and I had no idea of any of her family immigrating. So many Finns all over the place!

It is not always easy to search pieces of local history from another continent. A helping hand is required. You offered that hand ten years ago, and I thank you warmly for that once more.

—Olli Lahtine

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CHILDREN ATOP A SUPPLY OF CANNON BALLS AT
FORT STEVENS, CA. 1870S

CCHS IMAGE #65.309.058

